

No 7

T H E
NATURE and NECESSITY
O F
F A S T I N G.

Being the Substance of
T W O S E R M O N S
P R E A C H ' D

In the Parish Churches of *West Ham, Essex,*
and *St. Olave's, Hart-street, London.*

B Y
The Rev. WILLIAM DODD,
Lecturer of those Parishes:

And now published for the Use of all Christians
upon the ensuing PUBLIC FAST.

To which are added,
Two SOLEMN ACTS of Private Devotion,
proper for that Day,
From the pious Bishop KEN's *Practice of Divine*
Love.

Blow ye the Trumpet in Zion: sanctify a FAST,
call a solemn Assembly: Gather the People; sanctify
the Congregation; assemble the Elders; gather the
Children, and those that suck the Breasts; let the
Bridegroom go forth of his Chamber, and the Bride
out of her Closet. Let the Priests, the Ministers
of the Lord weep between the Porch and the Altar;
and let them say, "Spare thy People, O Lord, and
give not thy Heritage to reproach; that the Hea-
then should rule over them; wherefore should they
say among the People, Where is their God?" Then
will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his
People. *Joel ii. 15—18.*

LONDON: Printed for E. DILLY, at the Rose
and Crown in the Poultry, near the Mansion-House.

MDCCLVI.

(Price Six-pence.)

St. *Luke*, xxi. 34—36.

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, LEST AT ANY TIME YOUR HEARTS BE OVERCHARGED WITH SURFEITING AND DRUNKENNESS, AND CARES OF THIS LIFE, AND SO THAT DAY COME UPON YOU UNAWARES.

FOR AS A SNARE SHALL IT COME ON ALL THEM THAT DWELL ON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH.

WATCH YE THEREFORE, AND PRAY ALWAYS, THAT YE MAY BE ACCOUNTED WORTHY TO ESCAPE ALL THESE THINGS THAT SHALL COME TO PASS, AND TO STAND BEFORE THE SON OF MAN.



Mo
of a
faces t
rily,
But
and w
Tha
to thy
which

T
the gre
be, ev
find, o
doth n
enforce
came n
not nov
tery, m
he conf
delivere
their f
length a
no conc
giving,

S E R M O N I.

St. Matthew, vi. 16, 17, 18.

Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their Reward.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face;

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

TH E religion of Christ is internal, a religion of the heart: all outward duties and services which reach not thither, and flow not from thence, will avail nothing to the great point of Salvation, which is, or ought to be, every man's chief concern. Wherefore, you find, our Lord, in this divine sermon on the Mount, doth not so much establish a new Law, as explain, enforce, and open the spirituality of the old: *He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*: he doth not now first deliver his commandments against adultery, murder, swearing, revenge, and the like, but he confirms and *fully opens* those, which he had before delivered from Mount Sinai, by teaching the People their spiritual extent, that *height and depth, and length and breadth*, of which the formal Pharisee had no conception. He doth not now first enjoin *alms-giving, prayer, fasting, &c.* as necessary duties; but

ratifying their practice, recommends the true and acceptable performance of them ; and in each, particularly declares, that these best of duties and most pleasing of services to God, may be rendered the most odious and hateful to him, by a wrong discharge of them ; that if we do them upon any *selfish views* through vain glory, *to be seen of men*, we have our reward, even that which we aim at, but reward from God we must neither hope nor suppose.

As Man is a compound being, consisting of a soul and body, it is absolutely necessary, that he have outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, that the services which he offers to God, and the Returns which he receives, may be by outward means conveying *inward* grace : seeing in his present state man can neither comprehend, nor conceive of spiritual things, other than through the glass of natural : *for now we see through a glass, darkly, but then*, when we have dropt this dark and cumbrous mass of flesh, and are arrived in Heaven, *then*, and not till then, shall we see *face to face*, and know *even as we are known*. And as outward means are thus necessary not only to convey the knowledge but the supplies of grace to the soul, so we find, it hath always pleased the wisdom of God to instruct and support his children in this manner : of this the whole *Jewish* oeconomy is a standing memorial : and when their services were abolished, the great master whom we serve, was pleased to continue the same method of teaching in his Church, substituting his two sacraments in the stead of the *Jewish* ritual, as well as continuing the other general outward instruments of conveying the knowledge of his Truth, and the light of his Grace to the heart.

The subtle adversary of souls, as knowing the wisdom of God herein, and the security of the christian who lives in exact conformity to this wise plan of salvation, which the Almighty hath proposed to his

creature

creatu
vices to
ther :
ward
prized
suadin
effects
many,
to dec
notion
of Go
his de
who, l
ed cert
to chu
same t
these a
which
used a
health,
warmt
of mer
their
have it
lect th
them, a
the gif
commu
the use
the sou
life can
rishment

For
attemp
us : ho
together
ness of
stress u

creature man, hath ever used his most cunning *devices* to separate these which God hath so joined together: tempting some, either *wholly* to *rest* in the outward means, and to suppose *all* of their duty comprized in a regular performance of them; or persuading others, upon a representation of the small effects these outward means have upon the lives of many, *wholly* to neglect and disuse them, and to deceive themselves with vain and unreasonable notions of immediate communications from the Spirit of God. And he hath not been unsuccessful in these his devices: too many *formal* professors are found, who, like the *Pharisee*, *thank God*, with a self-grounded certainty of Heaven, because they fast, pray, come to church, and receive the sacrament; while, at the same time they are not *dead to sin*, and forget that these are *only outward* means of that inward grace, which must purify the soul: and which, unless used as means, will profit no more to their soul's health, than a large heap of fewel unkindled to the warmth of their bodies. Conscious of the weakness of *merely outward* means, and not duly considering their nature and necessity to convey grace, if we have it at all, some again are found who wholly neglect them, who *suppose themselves*, as they say, *above them*, and imagine—vain and deceived—that they have the *gift* and illumination of God's spirit immediately communicated; when we are assured, that without the use of outward means conveying inward grace, the soul can no more live to God, than the animal life can be preserved without the use of corporal nourishment.

For these reasons, we should be well aware how we attempt to alter the method of God's dealings with us: how we *put asunder* these, which *he hath so joined together* as to make them inseparable in the business of our salvation; carefully taking heed to lay no stress upon *outward* means, more than as *means* necessary

cessary to convey spiritual grace : and yet persevering unto the end in so regular and uniform an use of all the means, as to look up to God in and through them only, for that inward grace and good spirit, of which he hath thought fit to make them the channels to our souls.

Thus much it was necessary to premise as introductory to what I propose to speak on the Duty of *fasting*, which hath shared very much in both the abovementioned extremes : which is an outward mean and great instrument of the spiritual life, and which, unless so used, becomes like all other external professions, a mere dead letter, a lifeless branch, a barren fig-tree, *having nothing but leaves*. And as it hath pleased the goodness of God to put it into the hearts of our governors to establish a *Fast* in these kingdoms, that upon the present important, and solemn state of things, we may humble our souls before the dread majesty of Heaven ; and with weeping, fasting and praying, so turn to him, and implore his saving mercy, that his out-stretched arm may be turned away from destroying us,—that he *may be jealous for his land, and pity his people* : it is my duty, mean while, so to inform, exhort and admonish you, that on the day of humiliation you may present an acceptable sacrifice to God, *rend your hearts*, and *not your garments*, and so fast from sin, as to obtain by sincere repentance, a blessing on your country and yourselves. To which purpose, it may conduce

I. To consider the nature of *fasting*, as well as the great ends to which it should be directed.

II. For your encouragement to the performance of this duty, I will give you some examples of its remarkable success with God, and

III. I will conclude with some general observations, which may be of use, through the grace of God, to instruct you in the due performance of this duty, both universally and on the ensuing fast in particular, &c.

I. The

I. Then I am to speak of the true nature of fasting, as well as of the ends, to which it should be directed.

1st. Our Saviour's words in the text (which, tho' immediately applicable perhaps to *private* fasting, serve well to shew us the nature of fasting in general, seeing the *same spirit* must be found in religious duties of the same sort, whether performed in private or publick,) clearly shew us, *what is not* as well as *what is* the true nature of fasting, what is not, as well as what is the true and great end to which it should be directed. We must not keep a meerly outward fast, nor to be seen of men: but we must hold an inward fast, and a fast to be seen and *rewarded of our Father which seeth in secret*. But what shall we say?—Fasting is an outward thing, and we read in sacred story of outward manifestations of fasting, such as *putting on sackcloth, sitting in dust and ashes, walking barefoot*, and the like: and this, in instances which God himself hath approved and blest: now no man can *thus* fast, and yet not *appear unto men* to fast, and yet our Saviour commands us so to fast, as *that we may not appear unto men to fast*?—And the reason is very plain and obvious: He doth not condemn or disapprove *these outward evidences* of the *inward and real compunction* of the heart; but He disapproves them, when they are hypocritical—*be not as the hypocrites*—when they are *only* outward evidences, and are used as means to *deceive men*, not as means to express the *lowliness and sorrow* of a *broken and contrite heart*. The pharisee boasted that *he fasted twice in the week*, and that *he gave tithes of all that he possessed*: now it cannot be supposed, that our Saviour condemned either the one or the other of these, which He hath enjoined as necessary duties—*these ought ye to have done*:—but he condemns the proud, the ostentatious and selfish principles upon which the pharisee discharged them; not doing them in *simplicity and single-*

singleness of heart and eye to the glory of God, but solely to his own glory, and to obtain the praise of men which he loved rather than the praise of God.

So that hence we learn, whenever selfish principles of what kind soever prompt us to the duty of *fasting* (or indeed to any other religious duty) we may be doing what haply will gain us some reward from men (tho' in that, by the way, the hypocrite will not seldom find himself deceived) but we are entitled to, and must expect no reward from God. And hence we are led to see, that as fasting and outward manifestations of it are necessary, and have been approved of God, so they can only be approved by Him, as marks of inward fasting, mortification and contrition of heart. To cover the body with sackcloth, while the soul is a stranger to true compunction and mourning for sin, to sit in dust and ashes, while the man is not deeply humbled beneath the sense of his own *nothingness*, and utter unworthiness of all things in the sight of a pure and holy God: to walk barefoot, while our feet are not ready and swift to run in the way of God's commandments, to afflict the body, while we do not afflict the soul, are indeed signs of humiliation which men may behold, and from which they may conceive great ideas of a man's godliness,—but which God beholds with abhorrence and will punish with severity: for the *hypocrites hope shall perish*. But when with *Job*, and the worthies of old, we use these as testifications to our inward grief and real repentance; when we *do indeed abhor ourselves*, and so, *repent in dust and ashes*; when we abstain from meat and drink, and all worldly pleasures and carnal satisfactions, under the feeling sense and bemoaning sorrow of our sins; when we do indeed *afflict* our souls, as in those days of mourning, where *in the bridegroom is taken from us*; then do we *fast truly to the Lord*, then is our offering well-pleasing to Him; then will He *turn our captivity, give us twice as much as we had before, and bless our latter end*

more t
cerity o

Tho
now w
our Sav
face, &
nature
ordinary
had carn
their fa
might a
comman
to disco
teaching
fulness
while w
within,
in secret
it does
our soul
solicitou
sober ap
can nev
empty f
glory, a
estate.
than in t
worldly
fary part
dication

* See t

† The
only, but
it ἀφαιρέ
fashion of
thily defili
wan count
tended, I
say, that
the daily f
which the
forehead t

more than our beginning*. Seeing in secret the sincerity of our souls, He will reward us openly.

Tho' these outward manifestations of fasting are now wholly disused by us, (and that possibly from our Saviour's precept, *anoint thine head and wash thy face, &c.*) yet they serve well to lead us to the true nature of it: and because, I suppose, the very extraordinary and over-doing hypocrites amongst the Jews had carried this matter to a strange length, *disfiguring their faces* †, after a sad and doleful sort, that *they might appear unto men to fast*, therefore our Saviour commands a contrary behaviour in all his disciples, to discountenance this foolish and solemn mockery; teaching us to wear the same outward garb of cheerfulness and serenity, when we fast, as at other times: while we take especial heed to humble our hearts within, and to fast indeed unto our *Father which is in secret*. But thou when thou fastest, &c. But yet it does not follow, that, when we purpose to abase our souls before God in fasting, we should then be solicitous about the niceties and gayeties of dress: sober apparel well becomes such a purpose, and we can never so properly lay aside those gawdy and empty superfluities, the marks and tokens of our fallen glory, as when we come to deplore our lost and fallen estate. Not that fasting consists in this any more than in the meer abstaining from meat and drink and worldly pleasures: yet these are each of them necessary parts of it, and essential to it, as marks and indications of the soul's disposition, and as means to

* See the last chapter of the book of Job.

† The original word ἀφανίζω does not express *disfiguring* only, but an utter *marring* and *altering* the countenance, a causing it ἀφανίζω entirely to *disappear*, changing the *whole form and fashion* of the visage: which some have told us, they did by filthily defiling it all over with dust and ashes. That the *pale* and *wan* countenance usual with those who fast much, is not here intended, I think appears plain from the word: St. Basil used to say, that this paleness and meagerness of visage, consequent to the daily fast of great mortifiers, is the *mark* in the forehead, which the angel was to observe, when he signed the saints in the forehead to escape the wrath of God.

promote the great ends of fasting. And it would be just as absurd to talk of holding a fast to the Lord, and yet eating and drinking as usual on that day ; as to be deck'd and trimm'd out on that same day of solemn humiliation in the pride of dress, and the elaborate elegancies of art ; if we will be adorned, let it be, by all means, with *shamefacedness, sobriety, and good-works.*

Some there are, who pleading health and constitution, make fasting the very shadow of a duty, by supposing it, *artificially* enough, to consist in *fasting from sin* : much indeed is due to the consideration of our health, as will be hereafter observed,—but at present, we may remark, that this, by a strange misconception, is taking the *end* for the *means* : and to which, what was said in the introduction to this sermon may be applied : moreover, all the means which the wisdom of God hath enjoined, are not only fitted by his wise appointment and command, but also by *nature*, and in themselves, (if I may be allowed the expression) to promote the end designed ; this is the case with fasting, and perhaps would be found very remarkably so, were it accurately examined : nothing, as good men have always strongly advanc'd, conferring so much to the destruction of vice, and the increase of virtue in us, as regular and constant fasting ; or, as our church defines it, “ an abstinence from meat, drink, and all natural food : yea, from all delicious pleasures and delectations worldly *.” For as this is in direct contradiction to the vices of gluttony, drunkenness, adultery, and all other such evil fruits of the *flesh*, as are fed and pamper'd by a constant full feeding ; so upon a research into the causes, tho' appearing more remote, it will be found, that this same feeding to the full is one of the surest encouragers even of spiritual vices, such as impatience, pride, anger, covetousness, malice, envy,

* See the Homily of our church on *fasting*, and particularly *Exodus xix. 15, &c.*

revenge
in pra
sleepy
destru
the qu
that S
stinenc
of vir
No
fasting
so hat
vantag
of Go
the fer
circum
denies
hunge
their
the bo
with ?
David
that I
the he
impen
one re
the fe
the ma
denial
upon
passing
taken
allow
Saul,
aveng
proph
pinche
tho' h

* See
this ma

revenge, and particularly that *indevotion* and *deadness* in prayer and religious duties *, which how can the sleepy surfeiter ever perform? and as tending to the destruction of these vices, it of consequence tends to the quickning of the contrary graces and virtues, so that St. *Jerom* truly remarks, “ that fasting and abstinence helps not only to chastity, but to all manner of virtues whatsoever—*omnibus omnino virtutibus.* ”—

Now as there is thus a certain natural fitness in fasting, to promote the great ends proposed by it; so hath it (tho’ it derives all its obligation and advantage, from the immediate revelation and promises of God made to it,) its ground in nature, by which the sense of it is in some sort inspired, and which in circumstances of mourning, sorrow, and affliction, denies itself nourishment and takes off the edge of hunger. “ Men use to signify the violent passions of their soul, by forbearing the repast and delights of the body; is it a passion of grief one is oppressed with? you will see him oft forsake his food: thus, *David; my heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.* Is it fear that possesseth the heart with the apprehension of some great danger impending and approaching? you will have such a one refuse his wonted repast: so the mariners did in the sea-storm, *Acts xxvii.* Is it anger that vexeth the man? *Abab* was deep in his passion upon the denial of *Naboth’s* vineyard: and he throws himself upon his bed and will not eat. Is it desire of compassing any great design that the head and heart is taken up and transported with? such a one will not allow himself time for his meal: *curfed* be he, saith *Saul, that eateth any bread till evening, that I may be avenged of mine enemies:* we find the smith in the prophet so earnest at his idolatrous work, that he pincheth himself with hunger; and he will not eat tho’ his strength faileth, nor drink tho’ he be ready

* See Bishop *Beveridge’s* Works, Vol IV. p. 16—20, where this matter is set in the clearest and most satisfactory light.

to faint. Now in extraordinary prayer and *fasting*, the Christian is to have all those affections in a spiritual and holy manner, wound up to the highest key possible: he is to have a deep sorrow for sin, fear and trembling at the judgments of God dreaded to come for them: an holy anger and indignation against sin, with a violent desire to be revenged on it for the dishonour it hath cast upon God: and in a word, a longing desire to make his peace with God, and recover his favour, of which sin hath unhappily deprived him. Now because the excess of natural passions discovers itself this way, even to afflict their very bodies, and makes them deny themselves, that which nature most exacts: therefore God will have his people in their extraordinary humiliations do the like, that nature may not put grace to shame *." And doubtless grace ought to raise our affections as high about heavenly, as nature about earthly things. Wherefore, one † saith, "if thou would'st spend one sigh for the death of thy son, the groaning out the last drop of thy dearest blood were far too little for the death of thy soul: if thou wouldst wring thy hands for the loss of thy husband, well mightest thou wail all the days of thy life for the loss of communion with Christ Jesus: if thou wouldst beat thy breast for the burning of thy house, justly mightest thou break thy heart in pieces for the sinful consumption of thy soul."—I will conclude this point with a passage from the Homily of our church on *fasting*, where the true ground of fasting is very fully discovered and nervously expressed. "When men feel in themselves the heavy burden of sin, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold with the eye of their mind the horror of hell, they tremble, they

* See *Gurnall's Christian in compleat Armour*, a valuable and excellent treatise, page 402.

† *Bolton*, in his *Treatise on Fasting*, a work which might be of great and singular profit for the purpose of self-examination.—It enters deep and searches thoroughly.

quake, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart for their offences, and cannot but accuse themselves and open this their grief unto Almighty God, and call unto Him for mercy. This being done seriously, their mind is so occupied, partly with sorrow and heaviness, partly with an earnest desire to be delivered from this danger of hell and damnation, that all desire of meat, and drink is laid apart; and pathosomness of all worldly things and pleasures cometh in its place, so that nothing then liketh them more than to weep, to lament, to mourn, and both with words and behaviour of body to shew themselves weary of this life."

Here you see the true ground in nature of fasting: so that besides the command of God, and the sanction of a blessed reward, besides the numberless, and the universal examples of all his true saints and servants, in all ages, who have never failed to practise this duty in the sense above given; besides all these, we see that it hath its reason in nature, and a natural fitness to promote the end designed, even the mortification of the old man, and the life, power, and fruits of the *new*. And if what many able and physical writers have advanced (and which I think it would not be difficult to confirm by experience) be true, namely, that Fasting so far from being prejudicial, is absolutely serviceable to the health and strength of the constitution; we have then all Objections against it obviated, and our motives to the practice of it greatly heightened. Though I should not forget to occur to one prejudice more, which with sincere christians will, I know, easily be removed: some of whom persuade themselves, that by continued life of temperance, by being at all times abstemious in the use of meat, drink, and worldly pleasures, they fast acceptably: but herein they are greatly mistaken: all christians are called to temperance, and they who are yet not advanced so far, have to learn before they can fast: this is required of

us at all times, and all seasons, and in every thing, and they who have happily for themselves learnt this, must *fast* to encrease the grace, and to obtain further strength to support them in the practice of it. St. *Paul* was at all times temperate, and yet in *fastings* often. Temperance is a general virtue, fasting a particular duty: and whosoever doth not set apart solemn and private days of self-humiliation, as well as comply with those publicly appointed, will do well seriously to consider, that he is omitting a necessary duty commanded of God himself, fitted to the great end for which we live, and universally practised by all the servants of God, from the beginning to the present times—shall I say? alas, for us, we have too many fears and pretences, and pleadings for health and constitution, we have too much business on our hands, are too much engaged in our worldly pleasures and occupations, to set apart such solemn days of melancholy and mourning, to abstain from our common and usual food, and to lose so much time from our *delicious pleasures* and *delectations worldly*.—And why indeed should we—we resolve not to abstain from our sins, our vain and evil courses, and to make our days of fasting, days of self-examination, abasement and humility, and means to implant or improve the *new nature* in us the *life of God in the soul*?

This appears to me one, amongst the many reasons of the present acknowledged corruption in life and morals, that remarkable infidelity and profaneness which, like a torrent overflows the whole kingdom: the omission, I mean, of solemn and stated days of private humiliation; read through the lives and journals of all eminent christians, ministers as well as people, and you will find them much in this important duty. To go no farther back than the incomparable bishop *Beveridge*—whose good influence is not yet wholly vanished from the places where he exercised his publick ministry—how much do we see in his writings, how forcibly did he by

practice
as well
and seal
of priva
gments
though,
Scripture
all the
that it i
at all sea
at regul
as the co
admit, f
all world
only just
do his
suing, w
nary cou
general f
Our re
the neces
that men
question
hears or
ing of t
disciples,
comes it
and read
of him,
of neglec
who negl
nicate, ha
that they
very smal
Now had
God in all
thing wh
omit any
them: m

practice recommend the performance of this duty, as well the observation of all those solemn times and seasons, set apart by the Church, as stated periods of private humiliation?—No man can read his Arguments and be insensible to the force of them—though, I should rather say, no man can read the scriptures, no man can contemplate the examples of all the holy men of old, and not be fully satisfied, that it is absolutely his Duty, not only always, and at all seasons to lead a temperate and sober life ; but also at regular and appointed seasons to abstain for a time, as the condition and circumstances of each one will admit, from meat and drink, from natural food, and all worldly pleasures and delights. And I would only just ask any man, whether he thinks he should do his duty on the day of public humiliation ensuing, were he to do no more, than live in his ordinary course of temperance, without joining in the general fast and total abstinence from food?

Our reason cannot but be answerably convinced of the necessity of this duty : how then comes it to pass that men are so negligent in the practice of it? The question may be answered by another : no man, that hears or reads, can doubt of the true force and meaning of those words, which Christ spoke to all his disciples, *do this in remembrance of ME* : how then comes it to pass, that so many constantly hear and read, and yet never *Do THIS in remembrance of him*, never practise what they hear? The cause of neglect is exactly the same in both ; neither he who neglects to *fast*, nor he who neglects to *commu-nicate*, hath so much as *an intention to please God in all that they do* ; and yet one would conceive this, as a very small advance, a low degree in the christian life ! Now had a man only this *sincere intention to please God in all that he did*, he could never commit any thing which was contrary to his commands, nor omit any thing which he knew to be agreeable to them : more particularly when the duties enjoined should

should serve to promote the end he had in view, God's glory and his soul's good: which being eminently the case in fasting and receiving the Lord's supper, it plainly follows, that they, who omit either, have not yet so much as an intention to please God in all that they do! for which reason, it behoves all of us who have hitherto neglected this important duty, who have hitherto lived without this *intention*, which should be our pole-star to guide us continually over the ocean of this life, now to begin, now to lay matters to heart, and so to fast to God, as to answer the *great and purposed ends* of fasting.

2d. All religious duties, ^a and all gospel means, as they should be directed and used to one *end* only, the *glory of God*; so do they conduce to that one great *end*, yea and center in it, which the amazing love of God hath been pleased to make his glory, namely, *the salvation, the present salvation of our souls from sin*, and of consequence their eternal salvation from its wages hereafter. Christ who is the life and substance of all the means, came into the world solely for this purpose, to save *his people from their sins*; for this it was, *this peace* and reconciliation brought to earth, through the *good-will* and free grace of God to men, that the angelic choir sung *glory to him in the highest*, upon bringing the glad tidings of the birth of the holy *Jesus*: and unless this great salvation be wrought *in us*, our own evil nature will cast us down to dwell with fallen spirits everlastingly. To this *end* and purpose, fasting is an appointed means: and unless used to this end, as a means to express our godly sorrow, and to destroy our evil and corrupt affections, I know not of any profit that can arise to us from it. This, indeed, is not the work of a day, 'tis the business of our lives; as long as we live we shall have fleshly and spiritual enemies to combat and to conquer: as long as we live we shall have need to be always on the watch, to keep our *lamps trimmed and burning*; so that fasting is of perpetual obligation, and as a means to destroy sin in

us, and outwardly to express our inward shame and sorrow for it, continually necessary for Christians of all denominations, for *babes* as well as *young men*, and *fathers* in Christ.

And as this is one of the great ends of fasting, so another is, to *keep the body under*, that it may be brought in due subjection to the spirit: even St. Paul himself, as great a saint as he was, found this requisite for himself; and if for him, how much more for such weak christians as we are? *I keep under my body*, saith he, *and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away*. This is an alarming word to christian ears, and which should abundantly teach us the necessity of keeping under, and bringing the body into subjection, a want of doing which might have made even a vessel chosen as St. Paul, a *cast-away*!—To this we may add, what it will not be amiss to have an eye to, the exercising a kind of holy revenge against ourselves for the *abuse* of those good things, which God hath given us to *use*; of which we have made ourselves unworthy by criminal excesses; and our sorrow for which we willingly express *now* by totally abstaining from them, and by being at all times temperate in the use of them.

Another great end of fasting is to increase the fervour of devotion and the earnestness of our prayers: to this it hath always been found highly instrumental: then the soul soars highest, when it is least fettered and incumbered with the flesh; and then God hath been pleased to manifest himself most to the soul, when the body hath been most subjected to it: times of *fasting* and *prayer* have been eminently blest, with his favour: which, with the duty of *alms-giving*, are three handmaids that should not be separated: a goodly three—*prayer*, *fasting*, and *alms-giving*, which like the mistresses whom they serve, *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, should not be put
C afunder

asunder here upon earth, if we desire to reap the fruits of them, in heaven.

These are the great and principal ends of fasting: happy will it be for us if we fast to these ends, and for these purposes, sincerely and with all our souls bewailing our past offences, truly desirous to be *delivered from the body of this death*, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, crying unto God with fervent and importunate prayer, and turning unto Him *with all our heart*, with *fasting*, and with *weeping*, and with *mourning*; then *shall the land be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things**; yea such things, for us, as the scripture records for our example, He hath done in old time for those who have *so turned to Him*; some instances of which I proposed, Ildly to give you, but must omit to the next discourse.

In the mean season let us not fail to meditate upon these things: we are called to a solemn day of humiliation by our sovereign and his council, and surely we cannot fail to approve ourselves good subjects and true lovers of our country, by properly consecrating and duly observing that day. The times are critical; the calls from heaven are loud; the arm of Omnipotence hath shaken the earth, and its pillars tremble; we are warned to look to ourselves; we are admonished to prepare†: “The manifold sins and wickedness of these kingdoms have most justly deserved heavy and severe punishment from the hand of heaven; and the Almighty, out of his great mercy, hath not only been our defence in times of danger, but hath protected and preserved us from imminent destruction, especially at this time, when some neighbouring countries in alliance with us have been visited with a most dreadful and extensive earthquake, which hath also in some degree

* See *Joel*, ii and iii.

† These are the words of the *preamble to the proclamation*, &c.

been

been fel
Here in
for this
our neig
terror to
summon
of humili
tion of p
the high
these kin
above al
testant r
our state
suffer, i
upon th
and con
that a p
Christia
consider
fail in f
day, th
I would
hope, t
the me
Christ!
who is
prayer
and our
nation
dulgence
and, th
iniquity
want,
mighty

† *Neh*
* See
printed o
vice to se
temporal

been felt in several parts of our dominions."—
 Here indeed is sufficient reason to proclaim a fast—
 for this "terrible instrument of sacred vengeance to
 our neighbours passed close by our coasts, and spoke
 terror to us, as it passed." It gave us an awful
 summons. But mark, what further cause we have
 of humiliation.—"And whereas, the present situa-
 tion of publick affairs (as to the issue of them) is of
 the highest importance to the peace and safety of
 these kingdoms, to our commerce, and liberties, and
 above all, *to the most valuable blessings of the pro-
 testant religion*: we, from the deepest sense of this
 our state, and the miseries which our people would
 suffer, if a like visitation should be shewed forth
 upon these kingdoms, and placing our whole trust
 and confidence upon almighty God, have resolved,
 that a *publick* fast be observed," &c. And can any
Christian, can any *Englishman* be unmoved by these
 considerations?—Is there a man amongst us, that will
 fail in sincerity to turn to God, and to hallow this
 day, that he may *afflict* his soul before the Lord?
 I would hope, there will not be found any; I would
 hope, that we shall all join as one man, to implore
 the mercy of almighty God, for the sake of Jesus
 Christ! that we shall all join to *remember the Lord
 who is great and terrible, and contend with him*, in
 prayer and supplication, *for our brethren, our sons,
 and our daughters, our wives and our houses* †. Never
 nation * shared so many blessings and so many in-
 dulgences from Providence, as the *British* nation:
 and, thanks be to God, tho' too truly abounding with
 iniquity, yet we have not, and I hope, do not
 want, living as well as dead instances of the
 mighty power and love of God amongst us: oh,

† *Nehemiah*, iv. 14.

* See Bp. Hall's *Works*, Vol. II. p. 313. and the account lately
 printed of *the sufferings of the protestants in France* might be of ser-
 vice to set in full light before us the many blessings (spiritual and
 temporal, which we of this nation enjoy.

that

that the number were increased an hundred, hundred fold! oh, that you, my beloved brethren, were, each one of you, of that blessed number! and why should you be excluded from it? You have still the means of grace, you have yet the hopes of glory! Oh, use them before it be too late, and the day of the Lord surprize you as a thief in the night! How near at hand that day may be to each one of our souls, no man can tell. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the bands of the living God.* Think, were blackness † of darkness in a moment to surround us, were loud thunders

† The late distress at *Lisbon*, was as much superior in every circumstance of distress to what is here described, as things are to words. I shall just subjoin a few extracts from the letters that have been published, particularly those in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for *December*, some of which are the most affecting I ever read; and from which I have borrowed the circumstances of real distress above. *Darkness*—It was darker than the darkest night I ever saw, and continued so for about a minute, occasioned by the clouds of dust from the falling of houses on all sides. *Thunders*—Mr. *Fowke*, in his letter, says, the noise was like that of a coach and six driving by; another, a rushing noise like the sound of heavy carriages, driving hard at some distance. We are told, that before the overthrow of *Catania* by an earthquake, a noise was heard vast and horrid, as if all the artillery of the world was discharged at once. *The ground heaving*—Houses and streets seemingly danced under us; we were obliged to lie down and kneel, not being able to keep our feet. *Yawning*—The earth opened and rent in several places, and many expected to be swallowed up. *Shaking the houses*—We saw our house bending to and fro, like the mast of a ship in a storm. Almost all the palaces and large churches were rent down or part fallen, and scarce one house of this vast city is left habitable. The earth opened in abundance of places in the kingdom. Some of these chasms remain yet open; others closed up again: out of some issued water, from others came a sulphureous vapour, and from others there proceeded nothing but wind. *Groans*—Numbers expiring with groans and misery, and others (shocking spectacle) with the clergy running about over the ruins to confess and absolve them who were yet alive. All SHOUTING to God for mercy! Infinite were the numbers of poor broken-limb'd persons, who were forced to be deserted even by those who loved them best, and left to the miserable torture of being burnt alive. Women big with child were delivered in the open fields and places amidst the groans and

thunders horribly heard abroad, and sulphureous lightnings darting their forked blaze thro' the dire gloom; were the ground heaving and swelling like a rolling sea, yawning in fiery chasms, quick and fast, to devour its trembling inhabitants, and shaking the tottering houses, the work of ages, from their places: were the buildings now falling about our heads, the foundations now sinking beneath our feet; were rending streets and falling structures mingling their hoarse crashing with the dying groans and agonizing shrieks of wretched creatures expiring beneath the ruins, or reserved to the miserable torture of pe-

and cries of trembling multitudes. In the midst of these distresses a poor gentlewoman was deliver'd of twins! *Waves, fire—* While the people running, crying and calling to the ships for assistance, were gathered near the river-side, the water rose to such a height, that it overcame and overflowed the lower part of the city, which so terrified the miserable and already dismayed inhabitants, who ran to and fro with dreadful cries, that it made them believe the dissolution of the world was at hand; every one falling on his knees and intreating the Almighty for assistance. (This seems to have been almost a general persuasion.) The city was in flames in several distant parts at the same time; this completed the destruction of it. It raged with great violence. The fears, the cries, the sorrow and lamentation of the poor inhabitants are inexpressible; every one begging pardon and embracing each other; crying, forgive me, friend, brother, sister! oh, what will become of us! neither water nor land will protect us, and the third element, fire, seems now to threaten our total destruction—as in effect it happened. The conflagration raged nine days and nine nights with incredible fury! see *Mag.* p. 561. col. 2. C D E. The scene of misery and destruction is so horrible that one's blood grows cold at giving you a description of it! A remarkable providence seems to have distinguished the protestants (for amongst the great numbers settled in *Lisbon*, only about twelve or fourteen are missing) some of whom were saved in a miraculous manner, beyond all hope or expectation of escaping!—May the God of love make the hearts of all protestants overflow with grateful thanksgiving for these distinguishing acts of mercy and favour!—To conclude: I have passed thro' the ruins of the principal parts of the city, says one, and they are dreadful indeed to behold. I believe, so complete a destruction has hardly befallen any place on earth, since the overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. See the *Magazine*, Mr. *Fowke's* Letter, and one printed by *Payne*, in *Pater-noster-Row*.

rishing

rishing in devouring flames: were your little helpless children clinging around you, your wives, your friends weeping and lamenting on every side:—and was there no place of refuge, no shelter from the merciless storm,—roaring seas on this side lifting up their mighty billows to overwhelm and devour you—raging flames on that, cutting off all possibility of retreat—earth, sea, and fire, and every element in horrid combination to destroy—oh, how would you then invoke the aid, and call for the pity and pardon of your redeeming God? how would the terrors of approaching judgment force you to lay hold of the blood of Jesus? then how would conscience, supposing you to have hitherto despised him—how would conscience stare you in the face?—The outward horrors would be but trifling to the inward storm, and dread commotion within, while you were every moment on the point of expectation to have the earth gape beneath your feet and swallow you up quick into the bottomless pit! Good God, what words are sufficient to describe the bleeding anguish, or bewail the infinite misery of such a soul!—But had your life been spent in the fear and love of God, had it been your meat and drink to do his will, your soul's single intention to please and to serve him, amidst shocks and terrors like these you would be found composed and resigned; *then would the righteous man stand in great boldness*: and as knowing that his heavenly *Father careth for him*, in life or death gladly trust and willingly submit to his good-pleasure:—oh, think how unspeakably blessed it would be amidst approaching ruin to enjoy such a calm; and the world, even in the best of times, continually needs it: its vexations and troubles require something more than man to support us; what then must be the case when nature herself seems falling into ruin? Nothing but the grace of God in the heart can maintain this calm, when all the sea around us is raging; and if the excellency of it, if the pre-

sent

sent ne
we sha
shall f
ferven
we all
—if th
nity of
tives t
—then
ance of
unto t
abard
if to de
seem a
more l
lasting
is too
abstain
lights,
call yo
lesson i
regard
return
long o
which
Jesus u
him m
when t
art so u
of you
charge
graciou
in your
able pl
ing Sav
wailing
don, fo
Lord
ness to

sent need of it, but more especially the future need we shall all have of it on that day, when the trumpet shall sound, when the elements shall melt away with fervent heat, when the dead shall be raised, and when we all shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ,—if the awful consideration of a sure unending eternity of bliss or torment,—if these are sufficient motives to stir you up to an earnest seeking after Christ,—then begin, I beseech you, and implore the assistance of God's good spirit: begin, and sanctify a fast unto the Lord: say not with the carnal Jews, *this is a hard saying, who can bear it*: alas, as one observes, if *to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ*, seem a hard saying to us now, that will appear much more hard to us hereafter, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*. Say not then, that this duty of fasting is too difficult, too severe for you to perform: if to abstain from a little meat and drink and carnal delights, for Christ's sake, be too hard for you, do not call yourselves his disciples, whose first and chief lesson is that of *self-denial*; nor expect any love and regard from him, when you will not do this little in return for all that fasting and mourning, those long, long days of sorrow, faintness, weariness and woe, which He, unthankful sinner, which the blessed Jesus underwent for thee! Oh, how canst thou call him master, how canst thou ask any thing of Him, when thou art so unwilling to serve Him, when thou art so unwilling to be like Him?—But I trust, some of you at least, will be persuaded to the due discharge of this duty; and I pray God, the good and gracious Father of us all, to assist and strengthen you in your pious resolutions! You will find unspeakable pleasure in the serene contemplation of your dying Saviour's love; nay, and even in the sincere bewailing of your sins to Him, so ready is he to pardon, so willing is he to comfort, so desirous is this Lord of love, this Fountain of unexhausted goodness to bless and communicate the riches of his grace.

grace. And after a few more days spent in these duties here below, after a little more prayer, a little more hearing, after a little longer watchfulness, a little longer self-denial, good soldier of Christ, thy battle will be over, thy contest finished, thy victory gained, thy crown secured ; and thou shalt be received triumphant from the field of action amidst the acclamations of rejoicing angels, to the bosom and everlasting pleasures of that glorious redeemer, after whom thou hast fought, and thro' whom thou hast won ; and with whom thou shalt live and reign eternally, all duties ceasing, all means abolished, all supplies of food for ever useless ; while love, immortal love shall feast and employ thy ravish'd soul, transported with the divine vision and glorious contemplation of almighty *LOVE* from everlasting to everlasting :—To which blissful state that we may all arrive, and so know thee now by faith, as after this life to have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead *, grant, blessed Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

* See the Collect for *Epiphany*.

S E R-

S

I Obf
not
firm
Fasting
formed b
confirms
the prop
the prom
acceptabl
and the g
us, and t
died and
serviceabl
end : and
carnal, o
even tha
but as to
it, so mu
abominat
their cap
fast high
question
fifth and
YE AT
These ou
of sincere
From
fasting, v

S E R M O N II.

Matthew vi. 16, 17, 18.

I Observed in the former sermon, that Christ came not so much to establish a new law, as to confirm, fulfil, and shew the spirituality of the old. Fasting was ever a duty enjoined upon and performed by the people of God: wherefore our Saviour confirms the practice of it, by teaching his disciples the proper manner of performing it, and by giving the promise of a blessed reward to such as hold an acceptable fast to the Lord. His religion is internal: and the great end of it to destroy the body of sin in us, and to conform us anew to the image of him, who died and rose again for us: all outward duties are serviceable only inasmuch as they lead to this great end: and when used, without a view to it upon *selfish, carnal, or worldly* principles, they have their reward, even that which the end proposed will give them; but as to reward from God, as they do not aim at it, so must they not expect it; such services are an abomination to him. The children of *Israel*, during their captivity in *Babylon*, imagined their outward fast highly pleasing to God, and yet he puts this question to them, *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?*—These outward fasts unattended with the inward fruits of sincere humiliation, are not *fasts to the Lord*.

From hence we are led to the *true nature* of fasting, which we found to be, “ a voluntary abstinence

D

nence

nence for a time from meat and drink, and all worldly pleasures and delights of what sort or kind soever, the better to humble ourselves before God, to express our shame and sorrow for sin, to keep our bodies under, and to promote in us the spirit of prayer, and those other religious graces, which it hath a natural tendency to encrease, promote, and strengthen."

No fixt or general rule can be given as to the abstinence, which each particular person is bound to use: God hath left this to human prudence; and the constitution of each one must herein be their guide: wherefore if we find a total abstinence from food prejudicial to our health, and rather an obstacle than a service to our spiritual duties, we are bound then to take some small supplies of food; (*for the Lord loveth mercy more than sacrifice:*) but only so much as is just necessary: and merely for the end of supporting, not pampering the body: ever taking especial care not to deceive our own souls with any false pretences of this kind, nor making, without truth, our health an excuse for the neglect of this most profitable exercise, which is indeed, as it hath been justly called, "the nourishment of prayer, the restraint of lust, the wings of the soul, the instrument of humility and self-denial, and the purification of the spirit."

The general rule for those who are able, (and I am apt to believe this would be the case with far the greater part of us, if we were really willing) hath been to abstain from the eve of the fast, to the eve of the next day, or at least, till the end of the evening service: and then, by no means to feast upon dainties, which would be but a strange conclusion of a religious fast, but upon such plain and simple food as hath nothing of delight or luxury, and that only in moderate quantities.

Our church hath thought proper, following the usage of the primitive churches, to appoint, as annual fast-days, the forty days of *Lent*, the ember-days

days
vigils
Frida
hath
tional
of th
desiro
heave
solem
severa
penfa

It
vants
peran
script
christ
in the
the u
ticula
set ap
Whic
from
is inc
could
we m
to be
what

TH
to cha
in us
God h
seeing
covet
fin, v
contin
a glu
satisf
reple

days at the four seasons, the rogation days, and the vigils or eves of several solemn festivals, and every Friday, except Christmas-day, through the year. She hath moreover retained a power of appointing national fasts, as the several occasions and circumstances of the times may require. Private christians also, desirous of approving themselves in the sight of their heavenly father, have always been accustomed to keep solemn days of private humiliation, according to the several necessities of their state, and the several dispensations of providence towards them.

It is plain from hence, from the practice of the servants of God in all ages, that a general life of temperance and abstinence is not what is intended by scriptural fasting: the one is *at all times* required of christians, and he hath yet advanced but a few steps in the school of Christ, who cannot deny himself in the use of meats and drink—but the other is a *particular duty* required only at *some seasons*, solemnly set apart for the humiliation of the soul before God. Which again sufficiently shews, that neither is *fasting from sin* what is intended by scriptural fasting: This is indeed, the end to which fasting is the means: and could we in religion attain the end without the means, we might then reject outward fasting: but this is not to be done, and we must be careful not to separate what God hath joined together.

The great purpose of fasting is to humble our souls, to chastise our bodies, and to destroy the power of sin in us: to which it is an admirable means, ordained of God himself, and wonderfully fitted in its own nature, seeing it hath a natural tendency to destroy lust, pride, covetousness, indevotion, yea, and the whole body of sin, which is amazingly fed and strengthened, by a *continual feeding to the full*: whereby I do not mean, a gluttonous or luxurious living, but such a regular satisfying of the appetite, such a daily and habitual repletion of the stomach, as deadens and enervates

the faculties, and sinks the man deep in the mire of sensuality.

For which reasons every christian anxious to encrease the flame of devotion, and of divine love in his heart, of putting off the fleshly, bestial, and putting on the heavenly, holy nature, of *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and *living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*, will want, I would hope, no farther motives to quicken him in the diligent discharge of this duty, which thus hath a natural fitness to promote the great ends proposed in it, which was appointed by the God of nature himself as a means to these same ends, which hath been ever practis'd by all his true saints and servants, and which Christ, our gracious redeemer, hath bound by an invincible obligation upon all his followers, by prescribing the proper manner *how to perform*, and so of consequence the performance of this duty,—adding thereunto, as our motive and encouragement the promise of a blessing upon the due performance of it; *thy father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*.

But that we may have still further encouragement to incite us to this holy exercise, I proceed to give you, ——— *Idly*, According to the method proposed, some examples of its remarkable success with God, both in respect to publick and private fasts: and may he, of his infinite mercy grant, that they may be found available to stir us up to such humiliation of our souls before him, as may avert his dreadful indignation, and cause him still to spare and still to protect us!

1. *Abab* is a striking instance: he was a man renown'd for iniquity: "*There was none like unto Abab*, saith the scripture, *which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord: whom Jezebel his wife stirred up*, yea, even to the commission of a most complicated murder on the person of an innocent man: upon which the word of the Lord, by the prophet *Elijah*, threaten'd him,—*Hast thou killed and also*

taken

taken
where
thy bla
words,
put sac
cloth, a
mourn
tho' bu
came a
humble
self bef
in his
" rewa
use to t
pect m
cere hu
humilia
1 King
2. C
who be
cause o
ter by
general
eat nor
maidens
King, v
rish, I
which a
of the g
happy
and inv
3. B
awaken
before
city of
destroy
even no
this aw
veh sha
Nineveh

taken possession? Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. But when *Abab* heard these words, struck with terror, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly, that, is, slowly and heavily as mourners are used to do. And for this humiliation, tho' but temporary and partial, the word of the Lord came again to *Elijah*, saying, *seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me; because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his sons days will I bring the evil.* "A temporary
"reward of a temporary penitence:" but of infinite use to teach us, how assuredly *true penitents* may expect much more from God; and how available sincere humiliation of soul before him is, since the slavish humiliation, even of an *Abab*, was thus far regarded.

1 *Kings* c. xxi.

2. Queen *Esther's* success was no less remarkable: who before her bold and unprecedented attempt in the cause of her people, devoted as sheep to the slaughter by the cruelty of bloody *Haman*, proclaimed a general fast—"Fast ye for me, said she, and neither eat nor drink *three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the King, which is not according to the Law: and if I perish, I perish.* And you know the singular blessing which attended this pious purpose and bold attempt of the good queen, even her own and her peoples happy deliverance, and the downfall of their bitter and inveterate adversary. *Esther* iv, v, vi, vii.

3. But where shall we find a more comfortable and awakening instance of the success of true humiliation before God, than in the case of that great city, the city of *Nineveh*? for when God had determined to destroy the whole city, and the time appointed was even now at hand, he sent his prophet *Jonah*, with this awful message to them, *yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!* upon which the people of *Nineveh*, BELIEVING GGD, proclaimed a fast: and
put

put on sackcloth from the greatest of them, even unto the least of them : for word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, (by the decree of the king and his nobles,) saying, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste any thing, let them not feed nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God : yea let them TURN EVERY ONE FROM HIS EVIL WAY, and FROM THE VIOLENCE THAT IS IN THEIR HANDS. *Who can tell if God will turn and repent: and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not ?** And what was the issue hereof?—In the next verse we read, *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil that he had said, that he would do unto them, and he did it not*, Jonah iii. Oh may these men of Nineveh not rise up in judgment with the present generation and condemn it ; but may we on the ensuing day of publick fasting, turn as really from our evil way, and humble ourselves as effectually before

* How absurd must all this behaviour of the king of Nineveh appear in the sight of our *modern thinkers*, who ascribe all events to second causes, and dethrone the great author of nature to place the creature on his throne, doing like the idolaters of old, worshipping the creature more than the creator, *Rom. i. 25*. He works indeed by *second causes*, but they are all in his hand and under his wise and most exact direction and governance : these histories, as well as the whole jewish story, sufficiently evince this : But why do we pray to him for deliverance from *war, famine, pestilence*, from *moral* as well as *natural* evil of every kind, if we believe him not to sit in the heavens as king over all ? like the followers of *Epicurus*, we suppose our God, too indolently happy to regard the petty affairs of mortals ! for the honour of your reason, friends and countrymen, drop this absurd way of arguing : and remember that if providence careth for every sparrow, numbereth even the hairs of our head, nations can never perish, thousands can never be swallowed up, unnoticed, unregarded by him ! either therefore omit your prayers and boldly disclaim your belief in a general and particular providence, or talk no more so exceeding wildly of the *random shoots* of second causes to the great dishonour of the omnipotent creator, and wise ruler of the earth !

God

God,
ward
4.
and p
see th
any fo
which
us, ar
and f
which
that w
the de
from
which
whom
in the
this du
Peter,
hour,
fore me
that fe
gent in
alms to
1, 2,
tion, an
further
ercise, t
favour
this du
ple of
such gr
tiles.
nights,
God up
him.
God di
Horeb.
of it, h
foul wit

God, as they did, that like theirs may be our reward!

4. Numberless examples more might be given: and particularly in our Saviour and his apostles we see the necessity of this duty; before entering upon any solemn and great undertaking, and the success, which attends it: nay, some *kind of devils*, Christ tells us, are not to be cast out otherwise than by *prayer* and *fasting*; joint duties, of mighty efficacy, and which, shot from the bow of true faith, are arrows, that will make their way to heaven, and fail not of the desired mark. But I shall just recommend to you, from the *Acts* of the *apostles*, one Instance more, which is that of *Cornelius* the devout centurion, to whom the heavenly vision appeared to direct him in the grand business of salvation, when engag'd in this duty of fasting: “*Four days ago*, said he to St. Peter, *I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour, I prayed in my house, and behold a man stood before me in bright clothing.* He was a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, and who was diligent in these three great duties of *fasting, giving much alms to the people, and praying to God always.* Acts x. 1, 2, 3,—30. And it deserves your serious consideration, and should be laid near to your heart, as a still further incentive and encouragement to that holy exercise, that the greatest manifestations of God’s love and favour have been, when the persons were engaged in this duty of fasting: of which the foregoing example of *Cornelius* is a proof, whose conversion was of such great importance, opening a door to the gentiles. And “thus *Moses* was fasting forty days and nights, even all the while that he conversed with God upon mount *Sinai*, and received the law from him. *Elias* had fasted forty days and nights, when God discoursed so familiarly with him upon mount *Horeb*. Our Lord himself also, tho’ he had no need of it, his body being always perfectly subject to his soul without it, yet he also for our example, fasted for-

ty days and forty nights, even all the while that he was overcoming the devil, and had the angels to minister unto him in the wilderness. *Daniel* was fasting when the angel *Gabriel* was sent unto him with the precise time of the messiah's coming. And the disciples at *Antioch*, were fasting when the holy ghost in a miraculous manner spake unto them, saying, *separate unto me Saul and Barnabas, for the work to which I have called them.* By all which it appears, that when men are fasting, and so their bodies are subject to their souls, then God takes the opportunity of manifesting himself unto them: and of directing and assisting them in the way to bliss: and by consequence, that fasting is of greater moment to our being holy, than it is commonly thought to be. Nay after all it is very observable, that it is so necessary to our being holy, that we can never be perfectly holy, till we fast perpetually, I mean in heaven, where our bodies shall be fashion'd like unto Christ's glorious body, and reduc'd to such an excellent temper, as neither to want nor desire food: then and not till then will our bodies be brought into perfect subjection to our souls, and our souls to God: so that instead of eating and drinking, we shall be always living, always rejoicing, always honouring and obeying him. And seeing we can never arrive at the perfection of holiness, until we come to fasting altogether, we cannot surely but from thence conclude, "that fasting must needs contribute much not only to our being as near as we can like to the saints in heaven, but likewise to our coming to them; and so, that the fathers did not more commonly than truly observe, that as it was by *eating* that we were cast out of paradise, so is it by *fasting* that we are restored to it."*

And now that I have not only shewn you, the remarkable efficacy of this duty to obtain God's mercy, by some signal instances, but also its peculiar tenden-

* See bishop *Beveridge's* sermons, Vol. 4. p. 23.

cy to make us true saints and servants of God here, and so of consequence hereafter,—I can go no further but must leave these things to your serious reflection, while in the—III^d and last place, I urge you to the performance of this duty, and make some general observations, which may be of use, through the grace of God, to direct you in the due performance of it, both universally and on the ensuing fast in particular; for you must not mistake the matter, as if fasting was an occasional duty to be performed now and then upon public or solemn days only, or once or twice in a man's life: the reason of it is perpetual; and the practice of just the same obligation with the practice of devotion, or of giving alms: now as he can by no means be said to be a *devout* or a *charitable* man, who prays now and then, and now and then gives somewhat to the poor; but he who lives always, at all times, and in all places in the spirit of devotion and charity, with a heart turned to God, full of love to him and man: so neither can he be said to fast acceptably, who fasts occasionally only, who does not live in a regular observation of stated fasts, on particular days, as well as every day in the spirit of fasting, in the spirit of mortification and self-denial of all his evil and corrupt affections, of all the lusts of the flesh; for unless we *die* with Christ, we know that we *can never rise again* with him.

Never therefore deceive yourselves, or imagine that you are doing an acceptable duty to God, if you fast only upon a national fast, suppose, never regard the duty all the year beside, and what is worst of all, fast not entirely from the *works of sin*. For this is the great end of fasting; and be well assured, that though, with the Pharisee, *you fast twice in the week*, though you are never so regular, never so exact in the outward discharge of this duty, yet if you do it to as little purpose as he did, with such a heart, and upon such motives, *to devour widows houses, &c. to be seen of men*, like his will be your reward—but this

is no *fast to the Lord*, and will never avail with him for any blessings upon your soul.

“ For as long as we keep *ungodliness* in our hearts, and suffer *wicked thoughts* to tarry there, tho’ we fast as often as did either *St. Paul* or *John Baptist*, and keep it as strictly as did the *Ninevites*: yet will it be not only unprofitable to us, but also a thing that greatly displeaseth almighty God. For he saith, that his soul abhorreth and hateth such fastings; yea they are a burden unto him, and he is weary of bearing them. And therefore he inveigheth most sharply against them, saying, by the mouth of the prophet *Isaiab*, *Behold in the day of your fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours*, (pretending a fast, but being as much in the pleasures, vanities, and pursuits of the world and worldly things as at any other time.) *Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: Ye shall not fast as ye do this day*, [this is not the method] *to make your voice to be heard on high*. *Is THIS such a fast as I have chosen, a day for man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him—wilt thou then call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?* (Think ye, this fast pleaseth me, that a man should thus outwardly chasten himself for a day? No, but behold and consider)—*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?* (The first step towards an acceptable fast is to cease to do evil; the second, to learn to do good, as follows) *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out [and afflicted, Marg.] to thy house, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh*. Then (behold the blessed reward of such a fast) *then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy re-reward*. Then shalt thou call, and the

the L
garden
not;
ways,
own v
self-ap
shalt
thee t
thee v
mouth
ter, 5
ture o
direct
not ou
specter
teeme
which
hearts
mour
ward
all th
to dir
low to
So
step to
and t
sake i
must,
his m
the o
shewin
all th
hath o
fessing
lying
sons a
expect
calling

* See

the Lord shall answer—Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not; and while honouring the Lord, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words (renouncing all self-seeking, self-love, and self-applause, and depending wholly on the Lord) *then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* Consult the chapter, 58th of *Isaiab*. Seeing from hence the true nature of fasting, and the ends to which it should be directed, and “seeing that almighty God alloweth not our fast, for the *WORKS* sake, but chiefly *respecteth* our heart, how it is affected, and then esteemeth our fast either good or evil, by the end to which it is directed, it is our parts to *rent* our hearts, and *not* our garments, that our sorrow and mourning may be inward in heart, and not in outward shew only,—yea it is requisite, that first, before all things, we cleanse our hearts from sin,—and then to direct our fast to such an end, as God will allow to be good.” *

So that the first rule to be given, and the first step towards holding an *acceptable* fast, is to *repent* and *turn from sin, to loath, confess, and utterly forsake* it: To compleat which good beginning, we must, secondly, *turn to God*, humbly imploring his mercy and forgiveness of all our past offences for the only sake and merits of the blessed Jesus, and shewing the sincerity of our faith and repentance, by all those good works and labours of love, which he hath ordained for us to walk in: amidst all, confessing ourselves most *unprofitable servants*, and relying on the blood of Jesus, both to purify our persons and offerings. Thus if we do, we may well expect the regard and love of our God: and thus *calling*, we may be confident that he *will answer*.

* See the homily on *fasting*.

But if you remain, and will yet remain in a sinful state, if you live in a life of *sin* and *self*, not only this exercise of fasting, to which you are now called, but all other your religious duties are in vain: *this is the canker-worm that will eat up and devour them all*: this is the ACCURSED ACHAN *in your camp*, which unless wholly consumed, you cannot stand before your spiritual enemies, nor will the *Lord at all be with you* in your spiritual services: the one great end of all which is to purify the soul from sin, and to obtain it grace to help in time of need, without which it *can* never see God, for no man without holiness *shall see him*; without which it *can* never enter into the kingdom of heaven—for except a *man be born again*, have a new nature derived from Christ and the spirit, he CANNOT, it is impossible for him, *to enter into the kingdom of heaven*. See *John*, iii. 3. comp. 2 *Cor.* v. 17.

Unless, therefore, you are resolved, by God's grace, to *turn from* sin and *turn to* God; who is gracious, and very pitiful, who delights to multiply the pardon of offences,—unless you are so resolved, you will do wrong to mock him, like the *Jews* whom he so severely upbraids, with any pretences to fasting, which will only kindle his fierce anger against you, and enhance your own damnation. But, God forbid, this should be the case with you, my beloved brethren—Oh! consider, what it *would profit you, should you gain the whole world, and lose your own souls?* What profit can you have in these poor transitory things,—at the best very unsatisfying, and at all times very uncertain—what pleasure from the fullest of all worldly enjoyments that are in any degree worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed,—that are in any degree worthy to be received in exchange for an eternity of unspeakable horror, an eternity of weeping and wailing and gnashing the teeth in flames of never-dying anguish!

There

TH
tions
come
and
then
ones
upon
marb
one w
“ th
that
drop
ways
be tal
infen
and v
less a
ed in
from

Be
robbe
wasti
a tile
end
a ship
tween
stum
have
young
ny ha
becom
truth
paper

* S

There are indeed at all times, sufficient considerations to awaken in us a serious concern for the life to come : but at present, the calls of heaven are loud and alarming : and extraordinary voices from God then in much mercy speak to us, when the ordinary ones through their frequency and repetition strike upon our deaf ears, but as soft snow on the rocks of marble.—It is ever an arousing thought, enough, one would think, to awaken us from our sleep of death, “ that while we are sinners we are *condemned already* : that while we are sinners, the moment we die, we drop into hell ! ” —And then to think “ how many ways there are to death, how many ways a man may be taken off in one day ; besides the many diseases that insensibly breeding in the body, may kill us suddenly, and when least we think of it—(and what numberless and daily examples have we hereof in many snatched instantaneously in the bloom and vigour of life, from the midst of worldly pursuits,

Cut off even in the blossom of their sins—
No reckoning made, but sent to their account,
With all their imperfections on their heads :
Oh horrible !—most horrible !)—

Besides this, our houses are subject to fire, to robbery, tempestuous winds, thunders and other wasting calamities. If we walk along the streets, a tile or a brick may be sufficient to put an end to our being. If we loose from shore in a ship or a boat, there is but a foot's breadth between death and us ; if we get on horseback, one stumble may take away our life. What protection have we, what assurance, be we never so strong and young, to see the sun rise the next morning, since many have gone well to bed, and before morning it has become their grave ? ” * You want no proof of the truth of these things : you cannot take up a newspaper, but you must observe it big with these facts—

* See *Bolton*, on fasting. p. 20.

and

and if there be so many ways to let us out of this life, and we may be cut off thus suddenly,—and if we die in a sinful unregenerate state, we are certainly lost for ever—what miserable men are they who live in this state?—how is it possible for such one moment to *bear themselves*, or to enjoy one moment's calm? It appears to me the greatest marvel how such persons can breathe at all without horrible apprehension, lest the God that made them, offended at their continual neglect of him, should give the dread word, cut the thin thread, and summons the trembling soul before his awful tribunal!

That summons must assuredly come: there is but *one* thing upon earth certain, and that is, that we must *die*, and after *death be judged*: and as you cannot secure your lives one hour, for the sake of God, let me entreat you, let me prevail upon each one of you, to have compassion on your immortal souls, and to provide for their safety ere it be too late. For over and above these motives to seriousness, which at all times should prevail, reflect how loudly in these our days the God of glory summons you to *prepare to meet him*!—You cannot be insensible to the sufferings of your fellow creatures abroad, those sufferings which so very nearly concern us at home also: you cannot be insensible, that the like calamity might as justly have befallen us from the hand of heaven, as them: who, I fear, tread hard upon their heels in sin, and have but little more than they to urge in our own defence! at least this seems to be the opinion of our governors who observe, that the *manifest sins and wickedness of these kingdoms have most JUSTLY deserved heavy and severe punishments from the hand of heaven.* And if that *hand of heaven* should be stretched out against us, if that *strong arm, in anger and fury and great wrath should fight against us, and smite the inhabitants of this city and land*—Jerem. xxi. 56, as it did the unhappy dwellers in *Lisbon*,—* oh say—

* See the former sermon, p. 20.

would it find us in a better state, and more prepared to meet our God, than they, who were swallowed up in that wide, wasting ruin? In truth, it very little concerns us to judge ought with regard to them; that will make our case neither better nor worse: our sole business should be to *judge ourselves*, and to see to *our own ways*: *unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, is a word of serious admonition to all mankind, when the visitations of God fall upon any particular people. And we are infallibly assured, beyond all doubt, and can have no cloak for our sins, that if we do not repent and turn to the Lord, our national iniquities must at length prove our *nation's* ruin! We cannot open our eyes to God's dealings with other states, and remain unconvinced hereof.—Wherefore it highly behoves each individual amongst us, if we would either discharge our parts, in our public or private relations, to our king, our country, and our families, if we would desire the arm of God to be our protection, and his mercy our shield and safeguard, to enter into a serious *examination* of ourselves and our present estate, and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God, but in soberness and sincerity.

In order to which, it would not, I humbly conceive, be amiss, to set apart, each to ourselves, some one or other of the next ensuing fasts of the Church for the purpose of *self-examination*, before the day of national humiliation: that upon it we may search into and examine our own private sins and offences, and with true contrition, pour out our souls in sorrow to God for them—not with an intent to leave them awhile, and to return to them again, like a dog to his vomit, but with a full resolution to amend and utterly forsake them; so that on the day of publick fasting, we may be the better able, and more feelingly inclined to humble our souls indeed, as well for our own private offences, as for the crying sins of the nation, the multiplied sins of magistrates, the
fearful

fearful guilt of ministers, the complicated offences of people, yea, and the iniquities of all, to the vast heap of which, we have added an infinite encrease—the *heavy and severe punishments*, acknowledged to be justly due, for which, we are bound to deprecate with all our souls, to join in the public cry, *Lord save or we perish—spare thy people, O Lord, spare, and bring not thine heritage to reproach*: as well as in private to pour out our complaint before him, to wrestle with unwearied resolution, and to quit not our hold, till we obtain a blessing.

Indeed, the whole success of a general fast depends upon the manner wherein it is held by individuals: each one must look to himself and see that he performs his part, in *turning from sin*, and fasting to God, and then we may hope for a blessing, from him, who to our great comfort and encouragement, will not *destroy*, while even a *few*, a very *few righteous* remain in a city.

For those who are already of that blessed number, who have known what the love of God in the heart meaneth, who have already felt and deplored the burden and guilt of sin, and sincerely confessing, have found God *faithful and just to forgive*, and to *cleanse from all unrighteousness*—for those too, as no state delivers us from the necessities of *constant watching*, a course of examination will be found on this day very useful and quickening in their duty: more particularly, if while taking a catalogue of their offences, of those before the happy days of conversion, † of those committed

† It is to little purpose to enumerate *offences*: each man best knows the evil of his own heart: I have often thought, that a kind of *conscience*, and of consequence, a bad spirit is fed and indulged by the repetition of others failings, when done upon the best motives: but I cannot help hinting to *religious people* of every denomination that there seems some sins which the cunning of Satan may cover from their observance, which, as being odious to God, of necessity augment the national guilt. To these, I beseech you, ye blessed few, that are seeking after the kingdom of God — To these have

mitted since they knew the truth, they set in opposition to the black and dark list the bright and heavenly illumin'd instances of the manifold mercies and signal instances of God's love and favour to them: these undeserv'd as they are, will serve at once to heighten their sense of God's love, and of their own unworthiness, and so of consequence to implant and increase in their hearts, that deep and grateful *humility*, of which the sure fruit is *universal love*, which ever increases in proportion to the diminution of our *self-esteem*, the more *lowly* we think of ourselves, the more we see and feel our own *nothingness*, the more we shall *esteem* others, and *prefer* them to ourselves. And in short the grand business not only of *fasting*, but of the whole religion of Christ, is to destroy the whole kingdom of *self* in us, and to set up the kingdom of God in the *heart*, where he must reign absolute, our *will* wholly conform'd and resign'd to his, whose great lesson is, that we must *love one another as Christ hath loved us*: and in *lowliness of mind* each esteem other better than themselves.

To this fasting eminently conduces, and this end we must take care to answer: then shall we assuredly not be deficient in the other sister duties, which should always accompany this, *alms-giving* and *prayer*, gladly contributing from humble and compassionate hearts, to the assistance and relief of our fellow creatures, *not hiding ourselves from our own flesh*, but employing to their support, whatever we save on the day of fasting from our ordinary expences in

an especial eye in your self-examination, lest they prove *moths* in your garments; more particularly to the *pride* and *spirit* of a party, to the narrow bigotry of this or that *church*, *sect* or *teacher*, and above all to *spiritual pride*, to the God *I thank thee*," to the contempt of others, and what is worse, the *bold judging* either of clergy or laity. Remember the royal law of *love*. Read St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. and if a comment on that chapter call'd, the *Characters of charity*, printed for Davis, Holborn, fall in your way, attend to it; and may God bring you all safe to his kingdom.

food, or whatever more we are able. And extending our most fervent and ardent *prayers* to the father of mercies, through Jesus Christ our Lord, not for ourselves only, but for the community in general—that it may please him to avert his dreaded wrath from the kingdoms of our gracious monarch, and to grant him a long continuance of his reign, and his royal line a long and happy succession amongst us: that it may please him either to sheath the bloody and destructive sword of war: or to give us victory in the day of battle: that it may please him to give unto the nobility, magistrates and gentry, unto the clergy and laity *unfeigned repentance for all the errors of their life past, and steadfast faith in his son Jesus*: and that in particular, his mercies may be richly extended over all in the place where we live, his word have a happy and fruitful increase, and none amongst us be found despisers thereof to our soul's eternal loss!

Thus if each one of us, for our own parts, hold a fast to the Lord,—humble ourselves before God for our own personal sins—for the public and crying sins of the nation amongst all ranks and orders of men—deprecate God's just judgment due to, and implore his merciful forgiveness of these our offences—put up our sincere prayers for the king, and all orders of men, and the particular necessities of these critical and important times—accompany this with alms giving, works of faith and labours of love—and continue our fast by a life of holiness, and a diligent fast from all iniquity; thus applying to the throne of grace with right humble and lowly souls, not placing any merit or confidence in any thing we do, or trusting in our righteousness—then we have great reason to hope that the God of mercy will hear, save, and do, for the sake of Christ his Son our Saviour: yea, He who heard *Ahab* and the *Ninevites*, will also hear our prayers, and spare us; and not only now but all times, if we persevere in the good course, and turn not back again with a
longing

longin
of this
a little
of su
ber,
vows
one,
your
your
folly
free."
vows.
bedier
ment
lookin
with
friend
to del
Jesus,
which
partal
confu
and g
God
and y
the co
own
your
—sha
there
us no
God,
and s
which
we m
dom,
in the
'tis in
befor

longing heart to the evil which we have forsaken :
 of this we must be very careful, "*a cold catch'd* now,
 a little disorder in our walking after the humiliation
 of such a day, may be of sad consequence. Remem-
 ber, that as you have left your prayers, so your
 vows with God ; as you look He should answer the
 one, so He expects you shou'd pay the other : break
 your promise with him, and you discharge God with
 your own hand of any mercy He owes you : it is
 folly to think you can bind God and leave yourselves
 free." Take heed therefore to discharge all your
 vows, to keep free from sin, and to live in exact o-
 bedience : *Remember Lot's wife* ; and let her punish-
 ment be an everlasting monitor to advise you from
 looking back with a longing eye on burning *Sodom*,
 with a yearning heart and fond desire for your old
 friends and partners in guilt, your old bosom vices :
 to deliver you from *which*, God hath sent his Angel,
 Jesus, the great *Angel of the covenant* ; and with
which if you stay, refusing to follow *him*, you must
 partake of the everlasting fire sent from heaven to
 consume *them*. Fly therefore with all your speed :
 and get you to the *little city* of refuge and security :
 God is now as merciful to you as He was to *Lot*,
 and you may be as safe as he was, if you will obey
 the counsel of God, and reject it not against your
 own souls. And as there is now as much danger of
 your soul's destruction, as much cause to fly to God
 —shall I say as in the days of *Lot* ?—As however
 there is abundant cause of fasting and mourning, let
 us not hesitate to implore, in this duty, the grace of
 God, which alone can enable us to amend our lives,
 and so prevent us from being involved in that ruin,
 which is the certain consequence of sin. However
 we may boast of our natural knowledge, our wis-
 dom, parts and philosophy, we are but very worms
 in the sight of an all-wise and an almighty God ; and
 'tis in vain to trifle with him : life or death are set
 before us : two spirits divide the world—the spirit
 of

of Christ and the spirit of satan; if we chuse satan and sin, we must have their wages, death and hell: and if we are so base as to prefer *Barabbas* to an innocent, holy, bleeding Redeemer, we must expect that his blood will be upon our heads, and upon our children, as it was, according to their desire, on the heads of those who *once* made this horrid choice! May the God of love grant unto us, and to all of this nation, a better choice! and cause us so to abhor and confess our sins, that He may be found of us all, *faithful* and *just* to *forgive us our sins*, and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness*! May he accept and bless these and all other our most imperfect services, and more particularly may he turn the hearts of the people as the heart of one man, in true humiliation on the ensuing Fast unto himself, and sanctify his awful visitations to all the inhabitants of the earth! May his mercies and blessings descend in rich streams upon the head of our dread sovereign, and all his royal race and family; may He confound the plots and frustrate the devices of all their enemies, more particularly of those who would introduce popery and arbitray power into this happy isle: may He give true wisdom to all his majesty's council; grace, zeal and understanding to all his nobility and magistrates: to the clergy a flaming love for the souls of men, and an unwearied desire for the salvation of all those entrusted to their charge, of whom they must one day give a solemn account: and to all the people may He give an humble obedience to the king, his magistrates and ministers, and a zealous seeking after *the one thing needful*, after their soul's eternal health.—And, “oh, thou, who for our sakes didst fast forty days and forty nights, give us grace to use such abstinence that our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

P. S. I
why the p
that they t
from their
full convic
maintained
greatest re
knowledge
solemn ratifi
infancy, w
and forget
not think
at a propo
vow upon
ness, and
world, an
renounce-
form not
His?—To
duty, I ha
sent seaso
piece of th
an act of
our Vow.
proper to
dition of t
for the pu
necessity.

* See A

I, A

O Lon
fac
goodness
thee!

Thou
shine ow
again, g
Thou
me a m

P. S. I have somewhere seen it remark'd that one great reason why the primitive Christians excelled us so much in piety, is, that they took not up their religion on trust, nor received it blindly from their parents, but having examined the evidences of it, from full conviction embraced the faith, which they so honourably maintained. And it has often occurred to me, that one of the greatest reasons of the present remarkable decay of Christian knowledge and piety amongst us, arises from the neglect of a solemn ratification of our *baptismal* vow and covenant: baptized in infancy, we grow up in a disregard of that solemn act of religion, and forget to take upon ourselves, what our sureties*—alas—do not think it their duty to see strictly performed by us. Were we, at a proper age, to renew our covenant and take our baptismal vow upon ourselves, doubtless it would conduce much to seriousness, and to the destruction of that threefold empire of *sin*, the *world*, and *satan*, which in the most awful manner we promise to renounce—promise even to the adorable *Trinity*—and if we perform not our part, how can we expect that God should perform His?—To enable us therefore properly to discharge this solemn duty, I have subjoined to these sermons, as well suited to the present season and subject, two acts of devotion from that beautiful piece of the holy Bp. Ken—his *Practice of divine Love*; the one, an act of *Repentance for our Vow broken*; the other, a *Renewal of our Vow*. And I cannot recommend any thing better, or more proper to all well-inclined persons, than this same bishop's exposition of the Commandments—*Practice of divine Love*, p. 34—59, for the purpose of *self-examination*, a duty of perpetual use and necessity.

* See A Word of Advice to Sureties, &c. printed for W. Faden.

I. *An Act of Repentance for our Vow broken.*

O Lord God, with shame and sorrow and confusion of face, I confess and acknowledge thy infinite mercy and goodness to me, my infinite vileness and ingratitude to thee!

Thou Lord infinitely good and gracious was pleas'd out of thine own free mercy, first to love me, to excite me to love again, glory be to thee.

Thou Lord didst vouchsafe, of a miserable sinner to make me a member of my saviour, thine own child and an heir of heaven,

heaven, glory be to thee. I infinitely wicked and unworthy have despised and rejected, and forfeited all the inestimable blessings to which I was entitled, by my baptism, Lord have mercy upon me. Wo is me, wretch that I am, I have cut myself off by my sins from being a true *member of Christ's* mystical Body, and from all the gracious influences I might have derived from my union to him. Lord have mercy upon me. Wo is me, wretch that I am, I have by my numerous provocations lost that holy spirit of adoption whereby I might become thy child, O God, and call thee father; and am become a child of Wrath, Lord have mercy upon me. Wo is me, wretch that I am, I have by my own wilful impiety disclaim'd my being an *inheritor of the kingdom of heaven*, and am become an heir to the kingdom of darkness, Lord have mercy upon me. Wo is me, I have easily yielded to the temptations of satan, and have wrought the *works* of my father the *devil*, Lord have mercy upon me. Wo is me, I have greedily coveted and pursued the *pomps* and *vanity* of this wicked world, Lord have mercy upon me. Wo is me, I have often indulg'd the *sinful lust of the flesh*, Lord have mercy upon me. Wo is me, I have loved all things which thou Lord hateth and am myself become odious in thy sight, Lord have mercy upon me.

Wo is me, I have neither believ'd in thee, O my God, nor obey'd thee, nor lov'd thee as I ought, and as I solemnly vow'd I would, Lord have mercy upon me.

O Lord God most gracious, and reconcileable, pity and pardon me! I lament, O Lord God, my detestable impiety for having so long and so often, and so obstinately offended thee.

In the bitterness of my soul, O father of mercy, I bewail and abhor my unworthiness, and the hardness of my heart that has *despis'd the riches of thy goodness and forbearance and long suffering, which should have led me to repentance*. O Lord, whatever thou deny'st me, deny me not a *broken and a contrite heart*. O that my Head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears that I might weep much and love much, having much to be forgiven! Lord help me, hear me, save me, for thine own gracious promise sake, for thine own tender mercies sake: for the merits and sufferings of Jesus, thy beloved in whom thou hast made penitents accepted. Amen Amen.

II. Our

II. *Our Vow renew'd.*

I have finned, O Lord God, I have finned, and done evil in thy sight, but I repent, I turn to thee. *I confess* and forsake my wickedness, *and am sorry for my sins.* It grieves me, O most amiable goodness, it grieves me that ever I offended thee. With all my heart, O my God, do I now renew the sacred vow, which, alas! alas! I have so often violated. O Lord God I do, for the future *renounce the devil*, that arch-rebel against thee with all his apostate angels.

I renounce all his worship, all his impious suggestions, delusions and temptations, for which he is called the tempter, and all the ways of consulting him, which ungodly men have taken.

I renounce *all his works*, all those sins of the spirit, all pride and malice, and envy, all treachery, and lying, revenge and cruelty, all tempting others to sin, hatred to holiness and apostasy, which are his daily practice, and are truly diabolical. *I utterly renounce.* O Lord God, the *pomps and vanity of this wicked world*; all covetous desires of honour, riches, and pleasure, all sinful excesses in things lawful. I renounce, Lord, all evil customs, all evil companions, all that is vain or wicked in the world, all that *friendship with the world, which is enmity with thee*, all things that may alienate my heart from thee. I renounce, O Lord God, all worldly comforts and possessions, all my natural relations and my own life whenever they stand in competition with my duty to thee. I utterly renounce, O Lord God, all the *sinful lusts of the flesh*, all the inordinate desires of my own corrupt nature, of my own carnal mind, *which is enmity with thee.* I renounce Lord *all fleshly lusts which war against thee* and against my own soul; all sloth and idleness, and intemperance and lasciviousness; all *filthiness of flesh and spirit*, which render us unclean in thy sight. O Lord God I utterly renounce all things that may any way displease thee, from them all let it be thy good pleasure to deliver me. I know, Lord, that sin is the utmost abomination to thy purity, the most audacious outrage to thy adorable majesty, the perfect contradiction to thy deity, and therefore I utterly renounce and abhor it. I know, Lord, that sin exposes us to all the vials of thy wrath, and to vengeance eternal; I know it sets the sinner at the extreme-*est* distance and opposition and defiance to thee, and therefore I utterly renounce and abhor it. I know Lord I cannot *love thee*, but I must *hate evil*, and therefore I renounce and detest it.

it. Turn thou me, O Lord God, and so shall I be turned. Turn, O Lord, the whole stream of my affections from sensual love to the love of thee. O my God let thy heavenly love be the constant byass of my soul; O may it be the natural spring and weight of my heart, that it may always move towards thee. Thy love, O my God, shall hereafter be the sole rule and guide of my life, I will love thee, and love whatever thou lovest, and hate whatever thou hatest. *I will believe all the Articles of the Christian faith, and I will keep thy holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.* All this, O my God, I own myself bound to believe and do, and though of myself I am impotent to all good, yet by thy help I will perform it; and I heartily thank thee, O heavenly father, who out of mere compassion to my soul hast called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Glory be to thee, O Lord, who hast indulged me this opportunity of repentance; glory be to thee who hast wrought in me this will to renew my baptismal vow. O my God, I humbly, I earnestly pray unto thee to give me continual supplies of thy grace that I may continue in thy love unto my life's end, that being faithful to death I may receive the crown of life. O Lord God, I have sworn; and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. My heart is empty and disengaged, and longs for thee, my heart is entirely devoted to thee; enter O my God, possess it with thy gracious presence, and fill it with thy love, Lord for thy mercies sake restore me to thy favour; to all the graces and privileges of my baptism; of which I have been spoil'd by my sins. Lord make me a living member of thy Church, The mystical body of thy son. O my God unite me inseparably to Christ my head, and from thence let his gracious influences be ever streaming into my soul. *Father I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* But I return with the prodigal: O let thy paternal bowels yearn on me; and graciously receive me. Lord send thy spirit of adoption into my heart to instil true filial affections, that I may again be owned by thee, for thy child, and call thee father and share in the blessings of thy children, and at last become an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; O heavenly father accept my imperfect repentance, compassionate my infirmities, forgive my wickedness, purify my uncleanness, strengthen my weakness, fix my unstableness; and let thy love ever rule in my heart; through the merits and sufferings, and love of the son of thy love, in whom thou art always infinitely pleased.

F I N I S.



turned.
sensual
y love
natural
ve to-
ne sole
atever
eve all
y will
ay life.
ad do,
y thy
avenly
led me
Lord.
ppor-
ght in
od, I
l sup-
y life's
of life.
I will
d dis-
ted to
efence,
ore me
ptism;
e a liv-
y son.
d, and
g into
y sight,
n with
; and
n into
ain be
are in
rator of
imper-
ve my
kness,
heart;
of my

